

Policy and Training Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Based on the information obtained during the 2018 Three Year Assessment, including the status of system improvement, the following recommendations and implementation plans were formulated by the Children's Justice Task Force. The FY 2018 recommendations also include those that were again assessed to need continuation from the prior FY 2015 assessment.

- **Recommendation: Support plans for improving child safety outcomes developed by the Department of Human Resources (DHR)**

Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Provide child safety information to the Children's Justice Task Force on DHR's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) as the reports are made available;
- Participate in planning/collaboration committees developed by DHR; and,
- Develop/support Children Justice's projects which assist in DHR's plans to improve child safety outcomes.

- **Recommendation: Provide training opportunities for disciplines involved in the assessment, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect**

Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Seek to provide training opportunities in the four primary subjects identified in the Needs Assessment Survey, namely, cases involving physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and substance abuse;
- Explore resources, such as the Office of Prosecution Services or other legal agency, to secure training on Alabama's child abuse laws, including criminal laws;
- Provide cross-discipline trainings as appropriate;
- Enhance the assessment, investigation, and prosecution of complex child abuse and neglect reports, namely, family violence, substance abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse of child victims;
- Provide training opportunities to increase the knowledge of multidisciplinary team members on building a case for successful prosecution through such training topics as: importance of thorough investigations, properly gathering and maintaining evidence, understanding medical indicators of physical and sexual abuse, understanding medical reports, and testifying in courts etc.; and,
- Participate, as appropriate, in the development of trainings, protocols, and other information sharing materials to facilitate the handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

- **Recommendation: Assess the status of the system(s) providing trained medical examinations for suspected child sexual abuse victims**

Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Create a workgroup to develop an understanding of the status of the State's system(s) providing trained medical examinations for suspected child sexual abuse victims;
 - Conduct the status assessment developed by the workgroup;
 - Evaluate the information obtained on the status of the availability and access to trained medical examinations for suspected child sexual abuse victims; and,
 - Based on the outcomes identified in the assessment, evaluate whether CJA supported activities, projects or programs may assist in promoting or supporting the enhancement and availability of quality medical examinations for child abuse victims.
- **Recommendation: Support the expansion of programs and access to child advocacy centers (CAC) services and initiatives of the Alabama Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (ANCAC)**
Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work
 - Continue to support, through mini-grant procedures, opportunities for CACs to help assist the local multidisciplinary teams;
 - Evaluate the needs for program expansions within the ANCAC; and,
 - Work in partnership with ANCAC to enhance the services of CAC's.
 - **Recommendation: Provide team building opportunities and training to improve and enhance local multidisciplinary team's intervention in child abuse cases**
Plan to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:
 - Continue mini-grants to local multidisciplinary teams to support team building and training opportunities;
 - Encourage cross-discipline attendance and provide such training opportunities; and,
 - Continue to assess needs of multidisciplinary teams and opportunities to further support the teams' work.
 - **Recommendation: Support the efforts of the State Child Death Review System in providing multidisciplinary training on sudden and unexplained infant deaths (SUID)**
Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:
 - Monitor the progress of Department of Public Health in creating the availability SUID training and
 - Support the Department of Public Health's efforts to provide the coordinated and forensic SUID protocol.
 - **Recommendation: Continue supporting reform, as deemed appropriate, of identified criminal, civil, and juvenile statutes, rules, and regulations applicable in child abuse cases.**

Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Remain vigilant in the monitoring of proposed legislation, rules, and regulations having an impact on child abuse and neglect cases;
- Propose legislation, rules, and regulations needed to improve the judicial system in the areas of child abuse and neglect;
- Coordinate and support an advocacy role in areas of legislation, rules, and regulations having an impact on child abuse and neglect issues; and,
- Monitor and support expansion and increased utilization efforts of the drug and other specialty court programs by the Administrative Office of Courts.

- **Recommendation: Monitor prosecution and outcomes, including sentencing, of criminal child abuse /neglect cases in order to evaluate the system's needs**

Plans to Incorporate Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Consult with the Administrative Office of Courts and Office of Prosecution Services to determine if the current method of monitoring prosecution and outcomes is the most effective method;
- Continue utilizing the current procedure of obtaining prosecution and outcomes information, including sentencing and timeframes from filing to disposition, of criminal child abuse cases from the Administrative Office of Courts yearly unless a more effective method is recommended; and,
- Utilize this court information to provide feedback and recommendations.

- **Recommendation: Support the guardian ad litem training program provided by the Administrative Office of Courts**

Plans to Incorporate the Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Monitor the guardian ad litem training program and availability of GAL training for the purpose of identifying any type of support needed

- **Recommendation: Explore the feasibility of revising the law to require an autopsy on all unexplained and unexpected infant deaths**

Plans to Incorporate the Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Work in unison with the Child Death Review System on obtaining support for this revision in the law, and
- This recommendation will likely be delayed for implementation until 2020 due to the complexity of the issues

- **Recommendation: Support changes to sexual abuse laws regarding the age of consent and the minimum age difference between consenting adolescents**

Plans to Incorporate the Recommendation into CJA Work:

- Support introduction and passage of legislation to revise the penalties and/or the ages of consenting adolescents as identified in the recommendation

